

Road my body goes: re-creating ancestors from stone at the great *moai* quarry of Rano Raraku, Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

Colin Richards, Karina Croucher, Tiki Paoa, Tamsin Parish, Enrique Tucki M. and Kate Welham

Abstract

Recognizable throughout the world, the stone statues (*moai*) of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) represent the largest monolithic architecture produced in Polynesia. The exquisitely carved and finished head and torso of each statue testifies to a skill in stone carving and dressing unmatched throughout the Pacific. Yet, approximately one thousand 'classic' statues were produced at the quarries within a few hundred years. What was the ritual status of the quarry and the labour necessary to produce the numbers of statues that allowed Heyerdahl to declare that the 'whole mountain massif has been reshaped, the volcano has been greedily cut up' (1958: 83)? What was it like to go to work at Rano Raraku? By drawing on a range of evidence we argue that walking to and labouring at Rano Raraku represented a spatial and temporal journey to a place of highly dangerous forces, a cosmogonic centre where prehistoric Rapa Nui people came face to face with their ancestors and the Polynesian gods.

Keywords

Rapa Nui; Easter Island; Rano Raraku; *moai* roads; cosmogony; mythopraxis.

Introduction

Remotely situated, forming the eastern tip of the Polynesian triangle, is the small island of Rapa Nui (Easter Island). The island is famed for the massive stone statues (*moai*), adorned by cylindrical hats or topknots (*pukao*), which once stood upon large ceremonial platforms (*ahu*) dotted around its coastline (Plate 1 and Fig. 1). With heights of up to 11m



Plate 1 Ahu Nau Nau at Anakena, Rapa Nui.

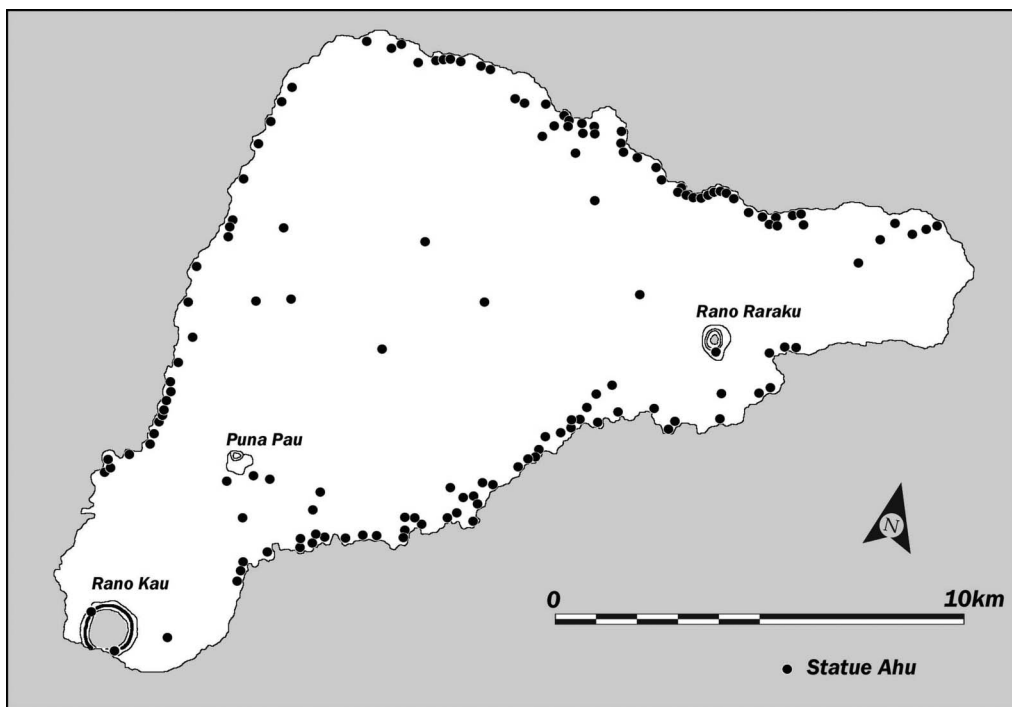


Figure 1 Map of Rapa Nui showing the coastal distribution of *ahu* (after Martinsson-Wallin 1994).

these amazingly graceful statues are sculpted from a distinctive yellow-brown volcanic tuff, which occurs solely in the south-eastern area of the volcanic cone of Rano Raraku (see Plate 2 below). Originally, the outer surfaces of the *moai* were highly polished (Skjølsvold 1961: 371) to create a smoothness approximating human skin. Undoubtedly, these were the ancestors of the prehistoric inhabitants of ancient Rapa Nui.

A date for the initial colonization of Rapa Nui has always been contentious, variously posited at either early in the first millennium AD (e.g. Kirch 1984: 267, 2000: 271), between 650 and 1100 AD (e.g. Martinsson-Wallin 1994: 83) and more recently *c.* 1200 AD (Hunt and Lipo 2006). Whatever the actual date for island colonization, the earliest *moai*, described by Thor Heyerdahl as ‘aberrant’ (1961: 512–14), were relatively small, stylistically divergent and carved from a variety of rock types. The overall distribution the ‘aberrant’ *moai*, together with the location of quarries in different parts of the island, can be interpreted as representing a practical strategy for materializing different kinship identities. However, through time this heterogeneity ceases and two principal quarries emerge, both of which had already been exploited as sources for a number of the earlier ‘aberrant’ *moai*. The first, Puna Pau, is a small volcanic cone, situated in the west of the island, which is the source for the red scoria *pukao*. The second, Rano Raraku, is a broad volcanic cone rising from an open plain in the south east of the island that becomes the main source of the volcanic tuff primarily employed for *moai*.

Over an estimated *c.* 300–400-year period there were somewhere in the region of one thousand *moai* carved at Rano Raraku. This is a vast number of statues and goes some way to revealing both the importance of the *moai* themselves and the centrality of the practices surrounding their creation at Rano Raraku.

Such a process was one of labour and toil, but what was the status of this work and of going to work at Rano Raraku? Journeying along pathways (Tilley 1994: 29–31), and even the physicality of walking (Ingold 2004), has been a prime topic of phenomenological research in archaeology (see, for instance, papers in Cummings and Johnston 2007). In this contribution we revisit these themes but argue that going to work at Rano Raraku represented a form of transcendent practice. We suggest that the experience of travelling to the quarry and working to create *moai* was mediated by the physical and metaphorical conditions of that journey. Mnemonic association and physical encounter combined to provide a transformation, not only manifest in the creation of *moai* but also for those undertaking this work. Moreover, it is suggested that *moai* production was by its nature a highly structured form of mythopraxis (Sahlins 1989: 379–80) and articulated Polynesian social relations and specific identities within the context of a cosmologically rendered island world.

The great *moai* quarry of Rano Raraku and the statue transport roads

A volcanic cone with its steep exterior slope and hollow interior is an extraordinary sight, both anomalous and dramatic, and Rano Raraku certainly conforms to this expectation in having an extremely striking countenance. Rising starkly from a flat plain, Rano Raraku assumes an almost sculpted appearance. Actually, it is to some degree sculpted by the belts of quarries that ring the southern interior and exterior slopes. However, when

approaching the volcano it is the large number of *moai*, which stand almost ‘guarding’ the lower exterior slopes, that provide the greatest spectacle (Plate 2). This is also a feature of the interior and in total almost eighty *moai* wrap the quarry area.

Not only has the shaping and extraction of numerous *moai* sculpted the inner and outer slopes of the southern area of the crater, but approximately 160, supposedly unfinished, *moai* lie in the quarries in various states of shaping. Inevitably, the production of *moai* has been mainly portrayed as an ‘industrial’ operation (e.g. Flenley and Bahn 2002: 116–19; Skjølsvold 1961). Arne Skjølsvold (1961: 365–72), who conducted excavations at the quarry in 1955–6, identified several stages of production. Initially, the *moai* were carved *in situ*, mainly in a supine position. They were then detached from the parent rock and removed to the lower slopes and erected vertically. This was to enable a further stage of production involving the dressing of their backs. Finally, they were dragged from the quarry to be erected on an awaiting *ahu*. In assessing the range of evidence present at Rano Raraku, Thor Heyerdahl concludes, ‘we are left with nothing but a series of production stages’ (1961: 504).

Intriguingly, the inner and outer slopes of Rano Raraku were not exploited as massive quarry faces but were effectively subdivided into discrete cuttings almost resembling small chambers or bays (see Hamilton et al. 2008). Nor is there any consistency in the architecture of quarrying with each bay having ‘been worked differently, and each has a character of its own’ (Routledge 2005 [1919]: 178). After prolonged observation, Skjølsvold reached a similar conclusion: ‘each individual quarry...has its own particular



Plate 2 The great quarry of Rano Raraku, note the standing *moai* at its base (photo: Colin Richards).

character. In some places only the surface of the rock has been touched, while in others the work has gone relatively deep' (1961: 365). Effectively, Rano Raraku is comprised of numerous discrete quarry bays with each displaying an individuality in both architecture and working practice, a distinction that will be revisited later. Suffice it to note that the quarry is of a composite nature.

The characterization of the erect statues wrapping the lower slopes of Rano Raraku as unfinished examples, awaiting further sculpting and transportation (Heyerdahl 1961: 504; Routledge 2005 [1919]: 188; Skjølsvold 1961: 369), is completely unjustified. In addition to the observation of Van Tilburg that 'the numbers and sizes of most of these statues could not have been accommodated on the existing *ahu*, none of which are prepared to receive them' (1994: 146), it is clear on stratigraphic grounds that the standing *moai* were erected at an early date. For example, the *moai* are buried, some up to their necks, in rubble and debris emanating from upslope quarries. Hence, they were standing before the higher quarries were exploited and in all probability relate to earlier lower quarry bays now completely obscured by massive heaps of debris. Moreover, excavation of a number of the erect *moai* revealed them to be either standing on stone platforms or in dug sockets (Skjølsvold 1961: 348–58). A consequence of this observation is that the statues at Rano Raraku were intended to be both permanent and strategically positioned at the quarry.

The final production stage of the *moai* envisaged by Heyerdahl (1961: 504) and Skjølsvold (1961: 369–71) was transportation from Rano Raraku to the awaiting *ahu*. The identification of the 'correct' method of transport has been investigated with obsession by many Easter Island researchers (e.g. Flenley and Bahn 2002: 121–33; Heyerdahl et al. 1989; Love 1990, 2000; Van Tilburg 1994: 155–8). Here, we wish to shift attention away from the method, being more concerned with the means.

Fascinated by the occurrence of numerous isolated *moai*, together with the practicality of their transportation to coastal *ahu*, Katherine Routledge became convinced that some form of road network must have existed in the past. The initial discovery of a prehistoric road occurred late on a sunny afternoon during her stay on the island. After ascending the summit of Mount Toatoa, less than a mile west of Rano Raraku, she notes:

the level rays of the sinking sun showed up the inequalities of the ground, and, looking toward the sea, along the level plain of the south coast, the old track was clearly seen; it was slightly raised over lower ground and depressed somewhat through higher, and along it every few hundred yards lay a statue.

(Routledge 2005 [1919]: 194)

This was the first recorded sighting of an ancient roadway on Rapa Nui. Significantly, the road identified radiated in a south-westerly direction from Rano Raraku, and 'as a clue had now been obtained, it was comparatively simple to trace two other roads from Rano Raraku' (ibid.). These additional roads led south, west and north from the quarry making it the centre of a network of roads radiating across the island (Love 2001; Lipo and Hunt 2005). The correspondence of roads and what Routledge (2005 [1919]: 193) terms 'isolated statues' initially led her to interpret the *moai* as being abandoned on route to different *ahu*. Regardless of Routledge's (2005 [1919]: 196) later revision, this primary statement provided a potent interpretative framework for understanding both the roads and the

recumbent *moai*. For example, some fifty years later, Skjølsvold noted that ‘the bulk of the evidence would seem to indicate that the casually deposited statues along the ancient island tracks were abandoned in the course of transportation from the image quarry to their intended ahu’ (1961: 379). Consequently, the *moai* became identified as ‘in-transport statues’ (e.g. Van Tilburg 1987: 33) and the roads were named ‘transport roads’ (e.g. Van Tilburg 1994: 137), or alternatively ‘*moai* roads’ (Love 2000: 118, 2001).

From the above review it is clear that a number of ideas and assumptions concerning the *moai* quarrying process were formed at a relatively early stage in the history of archaeological research on Rapa Nui. The basis of many of these ideas is at best questionable in terms of the particularity of the evidence and the general Polynesian context of image production. In the remainder of this paper we will re-evaluate these ideas and assumptions and provide a reinterpretation of the quarry at Rano Raraku.

The road my body goes

The title of this paper is derived from an account of a Bernice P. Bishop Museum expedition undertaken by Kenneth Emory, accompanied by Clifford Gessler, around the Tuamotu Islands, East Polynesia (Gessler 1937). The ‘road my body goes’ is actually the first line of a Tahitian song, lamenting both the leaving of the island and passing from this world (ibid.: 278). This characterization of a road (*ara*) is not unusual in Polynesia where, as Handy suggests, ‘it was generally believed that there was a definite route or path taken by souls of the departed on their way to the next world’ (1927: 71). The next world was the distant Polynesian ancestral homeland of *Hawaiki* in Eastern Polynesia or *Pulotu* in Western Polynesia. Access to this ancestral realm generally involved travelling along a road in a westerly direction to a specific coastal location, often a striking landscape feature, where the spirit ‘jumped off’ into the ocean. For example, in *Aotearoa* (New Zealand), the spirit road followed the mountain ranges north to Te Reinga, near the North Cape where the dead would ultimately ‘jump off’ into the ocean (Smith 1910 [1898]: 52). Similar spirit roads or paths leading westwards to a ‘jumping off’ point were present throughout Eastern Polynesia, including Hawai’i where spirits made their way to Keana Point at the north-west tip of Oahu (see, for example, Handy 1927: 71; Smith 1910 [1898]).

The passage along the spirit road was punctuated by ‘stopping or gathering places’ where choices and decisions regarding the ultimate fate of the spirit were negotiated (e.g. Handy 1927: 71–4; Williamson 1937: 275). In this respect it is a hard road to follow:

The souls of the Marquesans passed along the high mountain ridge that forms the backbone of the main island of their group to the high promontory at the west called Kiukiu. As they marched along the path of souls, the ghosts could be seen dressed in their white garments (mortuary wrappings), avoiding the valleys lest they be caught in the bush.... On their way the souls (or ghosts) strengthened themselves for their coming ordeals by bathing in a cool pool of water. Below the promontory was a rock. When the souls clapped their hands this opened, the sea rolled back, and the soul entered the nether world.

(Handy 1927: 72)

Given the temporal shift embodied in the journey from an island world to *Hawaiki*, the place of ancestors and origin, it is both unsurprising and informative that the Polynesian word for road, *ara* (or variants such as the Hawaiian *ala*), is also employed as a genealogical description (Huntsman 1971: 321; Siikala 1996: 47–8). But, as Hiroa comments when speaking of genealogy in Tongareva, ‘the terms *tupuanga* and *katiri* are applied to the general genealogy, but a particular line of descent from a specified ancestor is termed *ara*’ (1932: 25). This is precisely the characteristic drawn out by Ingold (2007: 80–4) to define the line of the road. Despite the havoc caused by births, deaths and marriage, a necessary expediency allows the *ara* form of connectivity to be maintained, certainly at a pragmatic level (Siikala 1996: 49). Here, then, *ara* is the direct linkage between person and ancestor within the ‘mess’ of genealogy (Ingold 2007: 116–17), and therefore a potent instrument in the negotiation of social identity. Importantly, the use of the term *ara* in kinship is not conceived as lines or paths focused on unilineal descent but rather envisaged as ascent (Handy 1927: 18–19; Siikala 1996: 49).

Clearly, the notion of *ara* in a Polynesian context embodies both spatial and temporal qualities; consequently, to be on the road in Polynesia is to be not only out of place but also out of time. The *ara* also stretches outwards and establishes ‘physical’ linkage between otherwise abstract social relationships (see Campbell 2006). Therefore, it should come as little surprise that in certain Polynesian contexts social position is materially defined in terms of residential position along a formal pathway or road (e.g. Green 2002: 129).

Going to work at Rano Raraku

A cosmological imperative in ancient Polynesia embraced social life as a series of transactions between people and deities (Shore 1989: 164). This is because ‘in Polynesia, all powers are from the gods, and in principle, are transmitted genealogically. Which is to say, authentically along established lines’ (Goldman 1970: 9), in other words along *ara*. Such powers can be construed as *mana*, itself a difficult and complex concept but best understood as a generative potency accessed from deities and transformed through ritual transactions and manifest in success and efficacy (Handy 1927: 26–34). Hence, ‘Polynesian religions thus constitute a set of practices and beliefs concerned with ritual transformations of *mana*’ (Shore 1989: 164). Such ritual always alludes to cosmogony because in all aspects it is necessarily re-generative. In this respect ritual practices are an extremely potent form of what Sahlins terms ‘mythopraxis’ (1989: 379–80), where ‘the ancestors appear in the living as history emerges and is actualised’ (Johansen 1954: 148).

Nowhere are these observations more salient than when attempting to understand the status of the practices for carving ancestors out of stone at Rano Raraku. Not only are ancestors being re-constituted in stone but also at a place that is potentially a conduit or *ara* to the place of origin, *Hawaiki* (or for Rapa Nui *Hiva*). Heyerdahl (1958: 86) described Rano Raraku as a place where statues were born and in this he was partially correct. It is a place of re-birth, a place of ‘mythopraxis’, where the final form of cosmic myth is current event (Hiroa 1932: 58).

In attempting to capture the immediacy of working at Rano Raraku, Van Tilburg has characterized the carving of the *moai* as ‘consecrated labour’ (1994: 126), and she provides an emotive account:

Chants, incantations, sacrifices and prayers would all have been involved and even the lowest apprentice or labourer was consecrated to the task in hand. Throughout every stage of work signs of success or failure would have been sought and heeded. Weather experts were consulted and rain was especially regarded as an omen. Purification with water, turmeric or fire and smoke protected the work from evil spirits. . . . Special *tapu* were placed on women and sexual conduct.

(Van Tilburg 1994: 126)

The actualities of carving are, of course, unknown; nonetheless, the important point to note is the ritual danger and necessary precautions attached to the re-creation of stone ancestors at Rano Raraku. This was a sacred place, an *axis mundi*, which undoubtedly was in a permanent state of *tapu*, as were the people when they laboured to create *moai*.

One of the most important results of the programme of survey conducted on the ‘*moai* roads’ by Lipo and Hunt (2005) was the clarity of their dendritic structure (Fig. 2). For the first time, it became apparent that as the roads ran across the island they continually

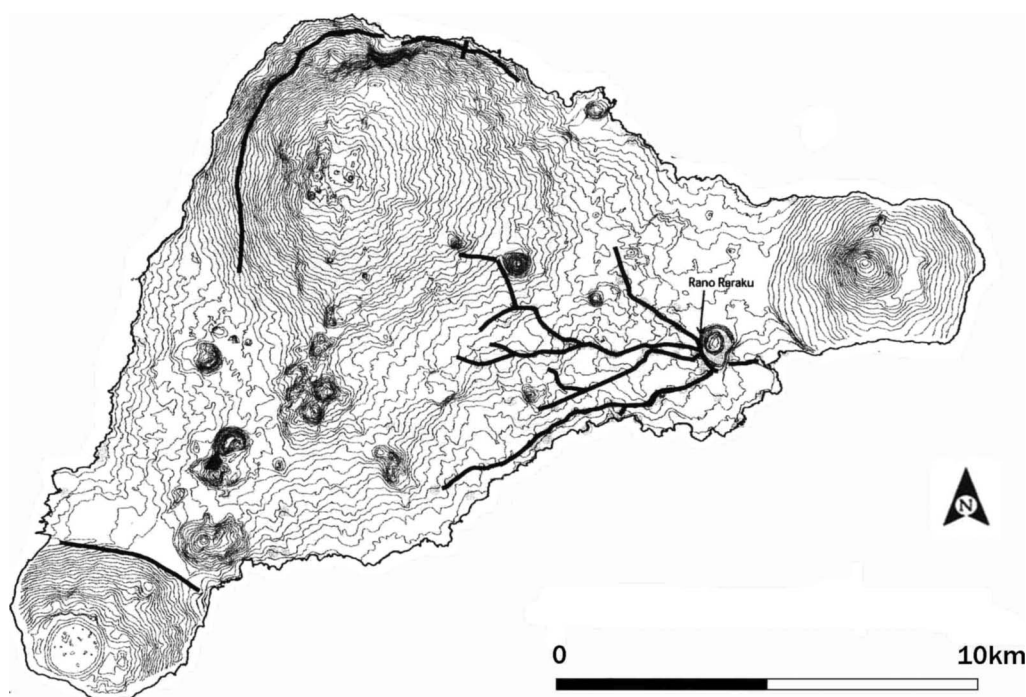


Figure 2 Map showing the dendritic nature of *moai* roads (reproduced by kind permission of Lipo and Hunt (2005)).

subdivided with offshoots running to different coastal areas and *ahu*. In some respects this organization had been anticipated by Routledge (2005 [1919]: 194) who observed two possible ‘branch’ roads running from the main southern road to the coastal *ahu* at Tetenga and the Akahanga *ahu* complex. This situation may not appear surprising if the roads were purely for transporting the *moai* from Rano Raraku to specific *ahu*, but appearances and assumptions, as we all know, can be deceptive.

In 2001, Charles Love conducted a series of excavations at points along the southern ‘*moai* road’. At a better-preserved section near Akahanga (Manavai East), where the road was bounded by kerb-stones (see Plate 3 below), excavation revealed the surface to be hollowed or ‘U-shaped’ in form (Love 2001: 12). The results of the excavations presented something of a quandary as the project was effectively designed to shed further light on the method of *moai* transportation (2001: 18–20). Despite not having the expected flat surface deemed appropriate for moving *moai*, the road did however reveal considerable evidence of wear and erosion (2001: 9). This observation inevitably raised the possibility that the wear pattern and the concave shape of the road were actually a product of ‘footwear’, although it was considered a post-*moai* phenomenon (Love 2004: 133).

Given these results, could it be that the *moai* roads have been substantially misconceived? If all roads lead from Rano Raraku, then the opposite is also true in



Plate 3 Kerb-stones lining the southern *moai* road (photo: Colin Richards).

that all roads lead to Rano Raraku. In his edited excavation monograph, Heyerdahl quotes an ancient legend regarding roads on the island:

When the island was first created and became known to our forefathers, the land was crossed with roads beautifully paved with flat stones. The stones were laid close together so artistically that no rough edges were exposed. Coffee trees were growing close together along the borders of the road, that met overhead, and the branches were laced together like muscles. Heke was the builder of these roads, and it was he, who sat in the place of honour in the middle where the roads branches away in every direction. These roads were cunningly contrived to represent the plan of the web of the grey and black pointed spider, and no man could discover the beginning or the end thereof.

(Heyerdahl 1961: 35)

Although the antiquity of this legend is unknown, it does seem to describe the system of the *moai* roads accurately. It also raises the possibility that the road network that has been interpreted as exclusively providing a means of transporting the *moai* (e.g. Love 2000, 2001) may be a formalization of *ara* of greater antiquity.

Ingold (2007: 81–4) stresses the major characteristic of a trail or road as a line joining two points. So how do we reconcile this definition with the dendritic organization identified by Lipo and Hunt (2005)? Resolution of this question requires an appreciation of the initial colonization of Rapa Nui. Through the evidence of root moulds initially discovered in excavations by Mulloy and Figueroa (1978: 22), and the botanical work of Flenley (1993; Flenley and Bahn 2002: 78–88; Flenley et al. 1991) and Mieth and Bork (2004), it is now known that a very different Rapa Nui was disclosed to the Polynesian voyagers, led by Hotu Matu'a, when they first stepped ashore. The island appears to have been covered by swaying groves of palms with trunks up to a metre in diameter and reaching up to twenty metres in height (Flenley and Bahn 2002: 84; Van Tilburg 1994: 47). In this island world, a process of subdivision occurred (Englert 1970: 51; Van Tilburg 1994: 45); as Mulloy notes, 'the initial group probably differentiated early and occupied a number of centers along the coast' (1995: 100).

This dispersal constitutes a 'founder focused' conical clan form of social organization (e.g. Bellwood 1996). Social differentiation and identity would inevitably assume a spatial as well as a kinship dimension. Over the years, some effort has been expended in attempting to re-create prehistoric territorial zones on Rapa Nui (e.g. Shepardson 2005; Stevenson 1986) or their occupation by corporate units (e.g. Sahlins 1958; Van Tilburg 1994: 86–96). This procedure can be criticized at a number of levels, not least concerning the actual fluidity of social identity and the corresponding permeability of physical boundaries. Nonetheless, we can assume the presence of social differentiation across the island and that descent groups maintained some form of spatial definition. Indeed, it was through attachments to kin and land, as opposed to the occupation of clearly 'mapped' territories, that ancient Rapa Nui identity was articulated. This encompasses the duality of place which bonds individual emotions, experiences and biographies with broader social networks and knowledge, essentially an interplay between routes and roots (Gustafson 2001: 673).

The *moai* roads were not built within neutral space but within a highly structured and nuanced landscape. Significantly, the routes taken by the roads would have affected and transgressed the homeland areas of many social groups. Rather than a unitary and centralized political authority, Rapa Nui descent groups may have been highly volatile and competitive (Kirch 1984: 270–1; Lipo and Hunt 2005: 166; Mulloy and Figueroa 1978: 134; Sahlins 1958; Vargas 1988: 133). Under these circumstances, the actual act of construction would have provided a potent mechanism for the negotiation of social identities. Hence, as the road ran through different areas its variable construction and altered appearance, together with the magnificence of adjacent facing *ahu*, constituted a visible manifestation of this strategy.

In the phenomenological resolution of the apparent tension between Ingold's (2007: 81–4) characterization of the road as linkage between two points and the dendritic organization of the Rapa Nui *moai* roads, we can also draw on Lipo and Hunt's (2005: 166) astute observation that the inhabitants of each region effectively had their own road which was perceived to stretch from a homeland directly to Rano Raraku.

Let us consider the nature of the journey from homeland to the great quarry. Due to its dendritic organization, as the road is traversed, so a number of intersections are encountered. These are places where distinct roads, running from other places, conjoin. To walk along the *moai* road is to experience physically an unusual conjunction of people and places that are historically related through genealogical descent. This is in stark contrast to the experiences of everyday life where generally different kin groups remain spatially separate and socially disparate.

Such a walk is not simply to experience a spatially ordered convergence of different kin; it is a unique form of practice architecturally inscribed on the landscape. Necessarily, it is both metaphoric and mnemonic, in that to walk the *moai* road is to participate in an architecture of kinship and memory. The *moai* road therefore provides a physical imperative to the linguistic conjunction of the 'path' or the 'way' and genealogical lines of ascent as represented in the term *ara* (Siikala 1996: 47). As vistas become open and closed, and conjoining roads and monuments are passed in succession, so mythical time conflates. Here, the journey spatially and temporally traces otherwise abstract genealogical lines of ascent and so, as the road is trodden, the past is revealed, as are the social relationships that comprise the inhabitation of an island world.

Meeting the ancestors

If, as was argued earlier, carving *moai* out of stone at Rano Raraku is understood as a ritual transaction between people and gods, then *mana* will be manifest in both the final creation and the creators. Accepting that gods and people represent polar as opposed to categorical opposites, the role of *tapu* is crucial in controlling and channelling the generative and destructive power of *mana*. Here, *tapu* can be considered as a 'state of contact with the divine by which the particular is encompassed and bound by the general' (Shore 1989: 164). Polynesians consistently ritually rendered people and things *tapu* through rites involving binding, tying and containing, notes Shore (1989). Consequently,

this idea can be extended to include the practice of wrapping places in architecture (e.g. Croucher et al. in prep; Hendry 1993: 98–109).

As Rano Raraku is approached, the convergence of *moai* roads produces at least five main avenues advancing towards the quarry from different directions. While small undulations shape the local topography there exists an impression of ascent to the Rano Raraku volcano. Further definition, in the form of kerb-stones, enhances the *moai* roads as the quarry is neared (Plate 3). Such formal definition highlights the ‘roadside’ as a liminal space that is necessarily experienced in an ordered manner as the road is traversed. Consequently, as Raitz (1998: 364) observes, the architecture of this zone of experience captures and mediates social and political relationships of the human world, and provides a potent architectural reservoir for grading space. At this point it should come as little surprise to learn that the ‘in-transit’ *moai* are actually lying on the roadside (Plate 4).

As we have seen, the association of *moai* roads and what Routledge (2005 [1919]: 193) terms ‘isolated statues’ initially led her to interpret the so called ‘in-transit *moai*’ as being abandoned *en route* to different *ahu*. However, a question remained: ‘if the images were really being moved to their respective *ahu* all around the coast, how was it that, with very few exceptions, they were all found in the neighbourhood of Raraku?’



Plate 4 Recumbent *moai* 12-30 at Tetenga alongside an offshoot of the southern *moai* road (photo: Adam Stanford).

(2005 [1919]: 193). In order to resolve the question she undertook a series of excavations around several recumbent *moai*. One excavation involved that of a partially buried head adjacent to a road situated approximately two miles from Rano Raraku. The result of this enquiry was the discovery of a hole or pit in which the *moai* had once stood (2005 [1919]: 196). Unfortunately, the position of this excavation is unknown, but the results demonstrated to Routledge that, rather than being abandoned 'in transit', the isolated statues had originally been set up in an upright position alongside the roads.

Clearly, Katherine Routledge's ideas concerning the status of the roads and the statues lying along them require further reconsideration. There are several reasons for this reappraisal. The first is the observation that all the statues have clearly fallen from a vertical position and that is why many are broken: due to the impact of the fall. Second, judging from their position of rest, they are consistently facing away from the quarry of Rano Raraku. Finally, there is the evidence obtained by Heyerdahl and Skjølsvold (Heyerdahl et al. 1989) when they excavated two statues (Statues 478 [13–477] and 504 [13–52]) along the southern road in 1986.

Excavation around statue 504 [13–52] was inconclusive although a 'very hard packed' layer was encountered in a discrete area directly behind the statue (Heyerdahl et al. 1989: 55). The second statue 478 [13–477] lies near the end of the southern road very close to Rano Raraku. This excavation revealed a circular stone platform at the base of the fallen *moai*. Despite the initial interpretation offered by Skjølsvold (1961: 379) that the *moai* along the road were 'in transit', the evidence from the 1986 excavations forced a concession. In the report of the excavation it is noted that the results 'lend support to the assumption by Katherine Routledge that the statues at one time stood on the very spot where they at present lay' (Heyerdahl et al. 1989: 56). However, despite the evidence, Heyerdahl and his colleagues stubbornly refused to change their minds, stating that the results of the excavations 'may also be interpreted as that the statues were in transport away from the quarries when they were abandoned' (1989: 57).

Recent resistivity survey at all the available recumbent *moai* along the southern road (Croucher et al. 2010) revealed the presence of circular stone platforms of c. 5m diameter at many of the bases of the recumbent *moai* (Fig. 3). Hence, approaching Rano Raraku not only entailed walking along the road with its numerous conjunctions, but also, as the quarry was neared, passing sequentially ordered standing *moai*. In order to go to work at Rano Raraku one had to fall within the gaze of the ancestors. Routledge described this passage in a more dramatic manner: 'Rano Raraku was, therefore, approached by at least three magnificent avenues, on each of which the pilgrim was greeted at intervals by a stone giant guarding the way to the sacred mountain' (2005 [1919]: 196). Indeed, as the subject approached the quarry, statues of ancestors were encountered in greater numbers and greater frequency (Fig. 4). These *moai* also tend to be of larger size and stature (Van Tilburg 1986: 270).

Rano Raraku was *tapu* and access involved a journey through space and ancestral time, along the *ara*. Meeting and passing ancestors was transformatory, effecting a change in state by passage through graded space and a process of unwrapping the sacred. Indeed, once this unwrapping had occurred the worker was about to confront

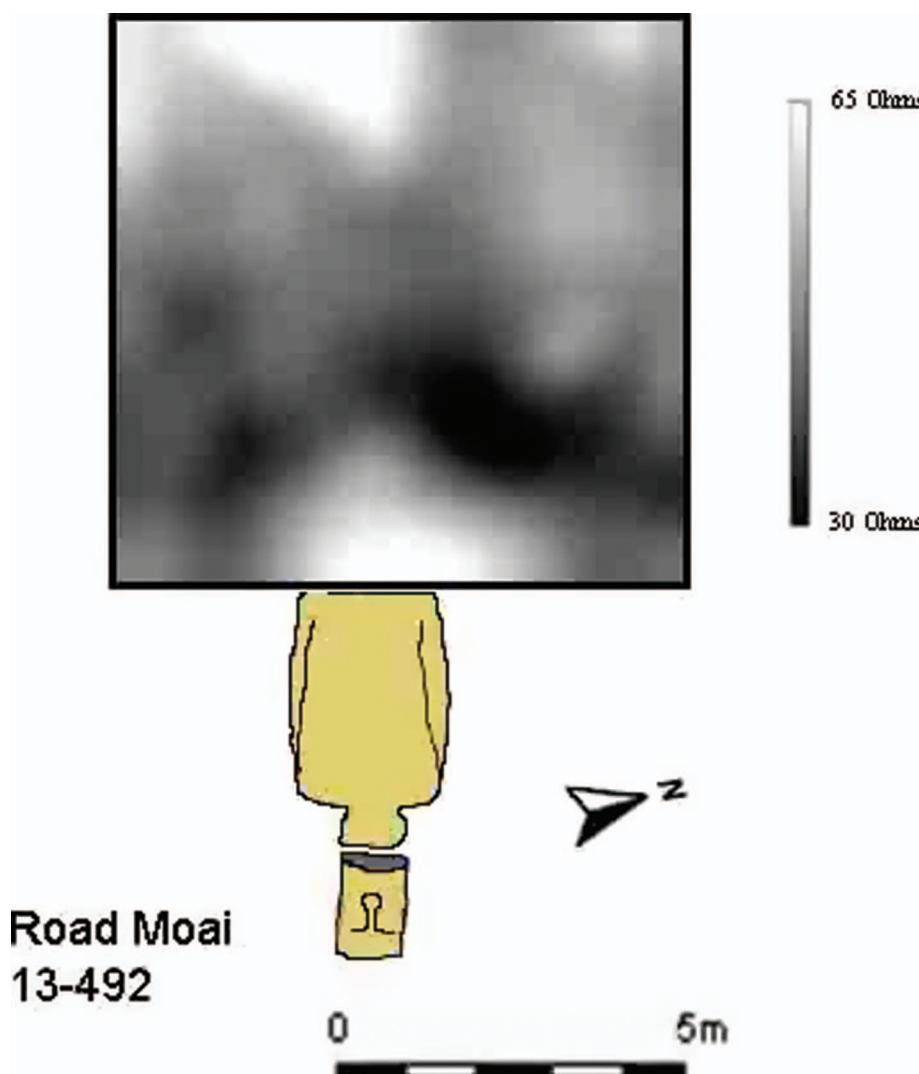


Figure 3 Resistivity plot of *moai* 13-492. Note the area of high resistance at the base of the statue. This was a consistent pattern.

the ambivalent and unpredictable powers of the gods in a most direct and dangerous manner.

And so to work

Even without the belt of *moai* running across the lower slopes, the large volcano of Rano Raraku is a striking sight. Forced up from a relatively level plain, the great volcano has a presence unequalled by any of the other volcanic cones in the east of the island (Plate 2).

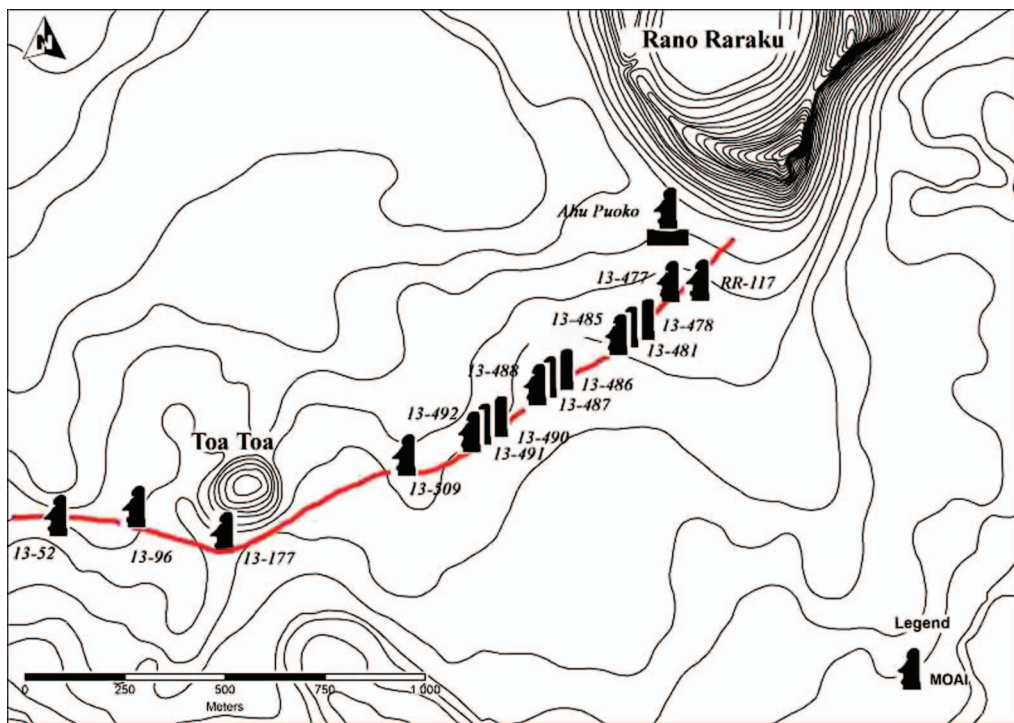


Figure 4 Plan of southern *moai* road approaching Rano Raraku (drawing: Kate Welham).

Clearly, the presence of standing *moai* adorning the lower slopes of the quarry is not a result of incomplete or unfinished working practices (*contra* Heyerdahl 1958: 88). Instead, the *moai* present a monumental facade, wrapping and grading entry into the quarry bays. For ancient Polynesians, volcanic craters and caves were dangerous and ambiguous entrances to the underworld and *Hawaiki*, the place of origin where ancestors and gods resided. As such it was necessary that such conduits be ‘wrapped’ sometimes physically, through monumentality or petroglyphs, and in practice by strict rules of *tapu* (Croucher et al. in prep).

Both Routledge (2005 [1919]: 178) and Skjølsvold (1961: 365) have commented on the subdivision of the Rano Raraku quarry into compartments, niches or chambers, or quarry ‘bays’ (Hamilton et al. 2008). Indeed, the discrete and exclusive nature of this architecture (see Cristino et al. 1981) is remarkable for its impracticability in terms of the quarrying process. Suffice here is to note that the actual quarry is not simply a single entity but a complex of discrete bays and extraction areas. Originally, the approach to many bays was adorned by associated standing *moai* (Hamilton et al. 2008; Routledge 2005 [1919]: 189; Van Tilburg 1994: 146). Clearly, the practices surrounding the carving and creation of *moai* can be likened to the *tapu*-laden ‘consecrated industry’ (Handy 1927: 282) or sacred labour of constructing Polynesian war and voyaging canoes (Handy 1927: 292–6). Hence, to ‘go to work’ at Rano Raraku involved engaging with a highly structured form of architectural representation which was embedded within discourses of cosmogony. Just as Handy (1923: 154–5) describes labour being choreographed by cosmogonic chants within the context of Marquesan canoe building, so equally potent ritual chants and songs may



Plate 5 Quarry bays at Rano Raraku (photo: Colin Richards).

have accompanied the work of creating *moai* at Rano Raraku (cf. Van Tilburg 1994: 126). Here the shaping of *moai* is referenced back to the creation of life – this indeed is sacred labour. Chants also indexed genealogical succession, for example, the tool being used gives ‘birth’ to the *moai*.

The subdivision of Rano Raraku into quarry bays surely relates to the spatial segregation of different social groups and lines of descent (Plate 5). Equally, the presence of vast numbers of basalt adzes (*toki*) remaining at the quarry (Englert 1970: 122) is a consequence of *tapu*. The interesting idea of the tool giving birth to the *moai* enmeshes them both in a genealogical relationship. Consequently, a relationship is established that descends from the *moai*, to the *toki*, to the kin group working in the discrete quarry bay. This essential conceptual and physical linkage may go some way to answering the question of why, despite the additional effort and risk, *moai* were completely shaped in the quarry bays, as opposed to being roughly hewn and completed elsewhere (cf. Flenley and Bahn 2002: 118).

Overall, because of the cosmogonic nature of the activities occurring within the quarry, there can be little doubt that Rano Raraku acted as an *axis mundi*, a sacred centre of the Rapa Nui world. Unified, yet differentiated, this is the story of both working at Rano Raraku and the nature of the conical clan organization of the people living on Rapa Nui several hundred years ago.

Conclusion

Walking is a very particular form of physical exercise; posture and purpose combine to provide a specific experience of the world (Ingold 2004). Walking along a road, as we have

seen provides direction, order and formality to a journey. Going from one point to another necessarily embodies a degree of transformation because the experience of the road is one of displacement and incongruity (Robertson 1997: 276). To approach the quarry at Rano Raraku was more than merely an act of remembrance or a journey back in time. This was mythopraxis: replication and re-inscription through practice. To walk the *moai* road was physically to trace lines of ancestral ascent mediated through the convergence of roads and visually punctuated by monumental architecture in the form of standing *moai*. Accordingly, to gain access to the quarry was to participate in a form of ordered regression, to pass before the eyes of the ancestors and to go to the very place of their creation – be it Rano Raraku or *Hawaiki*. Working to create ancestors out of stone was cosmogonic in all senses of the word: such an act ‘not only commemorates the sacredness of the site but also re-enacts the event being celebrated; the celebrant feels he [*sic*] can return to the specific time and be involved in the original event’ (Helms 1988: 48). In ancient Rapa Nui this was the destination of the *moai* road, the road my body goes.

Acknowledgements

We would particularly like to thank CONAF for their enthusiastic support and, together with the Council of Elders, permission to undertake fieldwork survey on the *moai* roads in 2009 and 2010. Initial fieldwork along the roads began in 2009 and we thank Abigail McLaughlin, Mike Parker Pearson and Adam Stanford for their participation in extremely hot conditions. We also appreciate discussions about the *moai* roads with Terry Hunt and his kind permission to reproduce a map of the *moai* roads. Charles Love was particularly generous in providing access to his work and discussing the results. Claudio Cristino and Patricia Vargas (although not agreeing with some of the ideas expressed) have been a constant source of help and encouragement, and we cannot thank them enough for their generosity. Sonia Haoa kindly discussed the results of her recent landscape surveys.

This research forms part of the Rapa Nui Landscape of Construction Project directed by Sue Hamilton, Susana Nahoe, Colin Richards and Francisco Torres H. We would like to thank other members of the 2009–10 team, particularly Jane Downes, Donald Kirkpatrick, Bob Nunn, Mike Parker Pearson, Josh Pollard, Mike Seager Thomas, Adam Stanford and Ruth Whitehouse, for their enthusiasm and discussion. Fieldwork in Rapa Nui was conducted and covered under Permit No 1699, Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales, Chile.

Tamsin Parish, *University of Manchester*
 Colin Richards, *University of Manchester*
 Karina Croucher, *University of Manchester*
 Enrique Tucki M., *CONAF, Rapa Nui*
 Tiki Paoa, *Tiki Villa, Hanga Roa, Rapa Nui*
 Kate Welham, *Bournemouth University*

References

- Bellwood, P. 1996. Hierarchy, founder ideology and Austronesian expansion. In *Origins, Ancestry and Alliance: Explorations in Austronesian Ethnography* (eds. J. J. Fox and C. Sather). Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp. 19–41.
- Campbell, M. 2006. Memory and monumentality in the Rarotongan landscape. *Antiquity*, 80: 102–17.
- Cristino, C., Vargas, P. and Izaurieta, R. 1981. *Atlas arqueológica de Isla de Pascua*. Santiago: Facultad de Arquitectura y Urbanismo, Instituto de Estudios, Universidad de Chile.
- Croucher, K., Parish, T., Paoa, T., Richards, C. and Welham, K. 2010. *Report on Geophysical Survey of Moai along the Southern Ara Moai*. Isla de pascua: CONAF.
- Croucher, K., Parish, T. and Richards, C. in prep. Wrapping in images: rethinking petroglyphs and monumentality on Rapa Nui (Easter Island).
- Cummings, V. and Johnston, R. 2007. *Prehistoric Journeys*. Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Englert, P. S. 1970. *Island at the Center of the World* (trans. W. S. Mulloy). New York: Scribners.
- Flenley, J. R. 1993. The present flora of Easter Island and its origins. *Easter Island Studies* (ed. S. R. Fisher). Oxford: Oxbow Monograph 32, pp. 7–15.
- Flenley, J. R. and Bahn, P. 2002. *The Enigma of Easter Island*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Flenley, J. R., Teller, J. T., Prentice, M. E., Jackson, J. and Chew, C. 1991. The late Quaternary vegetational and climactic history of Easter Island. *Journal of Quaternary Science*, 6: 85–115.
- Gessler, C. 1937. *Road My Body Goes*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock.
- Goldman, I. 1970. *Ancient Polynesian Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Green, R. C. 2002. A retrospective view of settlement pattern studies in Samoa. In *Pacific Landscapes: Archaeological Approaches* (eds T. N. Ladeffeged and M. W. Graves). Los Osos, CA: Easter Island Foundation, pp. 125–54.
- Gustafson, P. 2001. Roots and routes: exploring the relationship between place attachment and mobility. *Environment and Behaviour*, 33(5): 667–86.
- Handy, E. S. C. 1923. *The Native Culture of the Marquesas*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 9.
- Handy, E. S. C. 1927. *Polynesian Religion*. Honolulu: Bernice P. Bishop Museum Bulletin 34.
- Hamilton, S., Nahoe, S., Richards, C. and Torres, F. H. 2008. Quarried away: thinking about landscapes of megalithic construction on Rapa Nui (Easter Island). In *Handbook of Landscape Archaeology* (eds B. David and J. Thomas). Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, pp. 176–6.
- Helms, M. W. 1988. *Ulysses' Sail: An Ethnographic Odyssey of Power, Knowledge and Geographical Distance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Hendry, J. 1993. *Wrapping Culture: Politeness, Presentation, and Power in Japan and Other Societies*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Heyerdahl, T. 1958. *Aku-Aku: The Secret of Easter Island*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Heyerdahl, T. 1961. General discussion. In *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific*, Vol. 1, *The Archaeology of Easter Island* (eds. T. Heyerdahl and E. Ferdon Jnr). London: Allen & Unwin, pp. 493–526.
- Heyerdahl, T., Skjølsvold, A. and Pavel, P. 1989. The 'walking' moai of Easter Island. *Occasional Papers of the Kon-Tiki Museum* 1 (ed. A. Skjølsvold), pp. 36–64.
- Hiroa, T. R. (P. H. Buck) 1932. *Ethnology of Tongareva*. Honolulu: Bishop P. Museum Bulletin 92.
- Hunt, T. L. and Lipo, C. P. 2006. Late colonization of Easter Island. *Science*, 311: 1603–6.

- Huntsman, J. 1971. Concepts of kinship and categories of kinsman in the Tokelau Islands. *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 80: 317–54.
- Ingold, T. 2004. Culture on the ground: the world perceived through the feet. *Journal of Material Culture*, 9(3): 315–40.
- Ingold, T. 2007. *Lines: A Brief History*. London: Routledge.
- Johansen, J. P. 1954. *The Maori and His Religion: In Its Non-Ritualistic Aspects*. Copenhagen: I Kommission hos Ejnar Munksgaard.
- Kirch, P. V. 1984. *The Evolution of the Polynesian Chiefdoms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kirch, P. V. 2000. *On the Road of the Winds: An Archaeological History of the Pacific Islands before Contact*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lipo, C. P. and Hunt, T. L. 2005. Mapping prehistoric statue roads on Easter Island. *Antiquity*, 79: 158–68.
- Love, C. M. 1990. How to make and move an Easter Island statue. In *State and Perspectives of Scientific Research in Easter Island Culture* (ed. H. M. Esen-Baur). Frankfurt: Courier Forschungsinstitut Senckenburg 125, pp. 139–40.
- Love, C. M. 2000. More on moving Easter Island statues, with comments on the Nova program. *Rapa Nui Journal*, 14(4): 115–18.
- Love, C. M. 2001. *The Easter Island Moai Roads*. Rock Springs, WY: Western Wyoming Community College.
- Love, C. M. 2004. Getting to know you: Charles M. Love. *Rapa Nui Journal*, 18(2): 132–3.
- Martinsson-Wallin, H. 1994. *Ahu: The Ceremonial Stone Structures of Easter Island*. Uppsala: Societas Archaeologica Upsaliensis.
- Mieth, A. and Bork, H.-R. 2004. *Easter Island – Rapa Nui: Scientific Pathways to Secrets of the Past*. Kiel: Christian Albrechts University.
- Mulloy, W. 1995. Preliminary culture-historical research model for Easter Island. In *The Easter Island Bulletins of William Mulloy*. New York: World Monuments Fund, pp. 97–111.
- Mulloy, W. T. and Figueroa, G. 1978. *The A Kivi – Vai Teka complex and its Relationship to Easter Island Architectural Prehistory*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Raitz, K. 1998. American roads, roadside America. *The Geographical Review*, 88(3): 363–87.
- Robertson, P. 1997. Home and away: friends of Dorothy on the road to Oz. In *The Road Movie Book* (eds. S. Cohan and I. Rae Hark). London: Routledge, pp. 271–86.
- Routledge, K. 2005 [1919]. *The Mystery of Easter Island*. Rapa Nui: Museum Press.
- Sahlins, M. 1958. Esoteric efflorescence in Easter Island. *American Anthropologist*, 57(5): 1045–52.
- Sahlins, M. 1989. Captain Cook at Hawai'i. *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 98: 371–425.
- Shepardson, B. L. 2005. The role of Rapa Nui (Easter Island) statuary as territorial boundary markers. *Antiquity*, 79: 169–78.
- Shore, B. 1989. Mana and tapu. In *Developments in Polynesian ethnology* (eds A. Howard and R. Borofsky). Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, pp. 137–74.
- Siikala, J. 1996. The elder and the younger: foreign and autochthonous origin and hierarchy in the Cook Islands. In *Origins, Ancestry and Alliance: Explorations in Austronesian Ethnography* (eds. J. J. Fox and C. Sather). Canberra: Australian National University Press, pp. 43–54.
- Skjølsvold, A., 1961. The stone statues and quarries of Rano Raraku. *Reports of the Norwegian Archaeological Expedition to Easter Island and the East Pacific*, Vol. 1, *The Archaeology of Easter Island* (eds. T. Heyerdahl and E. Ferdon Jnr). London: Allen & Unwin, pp. 339–79.

Smith, S. P. 1910 [1898]. *Hawaiki: The Whence of the Maori, with a Sketch of Polynesian History*. Wellington, NZ: Whitcombe & Tombs.

Stevenson, C. M. 1986. The socio-political structure of the southern coastal area of Easter Island: AD 1300–1864. In *Island Societies: Archaeological Approaches to Evolution and Transformation* (ed. P. V. Kirch). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 69–77.

Tilley, C. 1994. *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*. Oxford: Berg.

Van Tilburg, J. 1986. Power and symbol: the stylistic analysis of Easter Island monolithic sculpture. Doctoral dissertation. Department of Anthropology, University of California, Los Angeles.

Van Tilburg, J. 1987. Symbolic archaeology on Easter Island. *Archaeology*, 40(2): 26–33.

Van Tilburg, J. A. 1994. *Easter Island: Archaeology, Ecology and Culture*. London: British Museum Press.

Vargas, C. P. 1988. Easter Island statue type, part one: the moai as archaeological artifact. In *First International Congress Easter Island and East Polynesia*, Vol. 1, *Archaeology* (eds C. Cristino, P. Vargas, R. Izaurieta and R. Budd). Isla de Pascua: Universidad de Chile, pp. 133–49.

Williamson, R. W. 1937. *Religion and Social Organization in Central Polynesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Colin Richards is Reader in Archaeology at the University of Manchester. He is best known for research into the Orcadian Neolithic, but is also a co-director of the Stonehenge Riverside Project and together with Sue Hamilton, Susana Nahoe and Francisco Tones H. founded the Rapa Nui Landscapes of Construction Project in 2006.

Karina Croucher is a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Manchester. Her main research interests are the Neolithic of the Near East and representations and adornment of the human body. She undertook fieldwork within the Rapa Nui Landscapes of Construction Project on the *moai* roads in 2010.

Tiki Paoa is a Rapa Nui undergraduate archaeology student. He has extensive experience of survey and excavation on Rapa Nui, and within the Rapa Nui Landscapes of Construction Project undertook geophysical survey on the *moai* roads in 2010. More recently he has been working with Jo Anne Van Tilburg at Rano Raraku.

Tamsin Parish is a graduate in archaeology from the University of Manchester. She undertook fieldwork within the Rapa Nui Landscapes of Construction Project on the *moai* roads in 2010.

Enrique Tucki M. is a senior warden with CONAF, Rapa Nui. He is currently in charge of the presentation of monuments within the World Heritage Site. His main interests lie in the domain of public archaeology.

Kate Welham is Senior Lecturer in Archaeological Sciences at Bournemouth University. She is a co-director of the AHRC funded Stonehenge Riverside Project and has been conducting research within the Rapa Nui Landscapes of Construction Project since 2008. Her main area of interest focuses on Contact Period Rapa Nui archaeology.